

ADMIRAL MOORE DELIVERS ADDRESS AT MEETING OF SOCIAL SCIENCE SOCIETY ON "THE AMERICAN ESAU"

At a recent meeting of the Social Science Association Rear-Admiral C. B. T. Moore was the speaker of the day, and chose as his subject "The American Esau." The address of Admiral Moore, in full, was as follows:

THE AMERICAN ESAU

I have entitled this paper the American Esau, because I believe that the American citizen has been selling his birthright for a mess of pottage when he has not literally given it away.

It is admitted, I believe, by everybody that there has arisen a condition in the United States, which the vast majority of the people consider no longer tolerable, and for which many political doctors are offering remedies more or less impossible of adoption without serious danger to the life of the nation.

Some years ago I had occasion to consult a medical gentleman in regard to a sufferer in whom I was much interested. My medical friend said: "I have for some time known the patient has been ill. I shall be glad to do what I can, but before prescribing a remedy I must make an examination to determine the cause of the sickness."

Now we know that the United States is suffering from some disease. The restlessness of the people, the various proposals to change the constitution and laws of the land will warrant us in the conclusion that in some way it would be well to find out what is the matter.

There seems to be a feeling that by reason of economic conditions, or by the economic policies of our government, the people of the United States do not receive a fair share of the returns of labor. It is contended in some quarters that the reason for such unfair distribution lies in the fundamental wrong of a protective tariff. In other quarters the unfair distribution is attributed to what has come to be called "big business" or "trusts."

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the principle of protection to American industries. Neither am I prepared to discuss this evening the question of the righteousness of "big business" or "trusts" as to their right to exist. I understand, however, that it would be a very difficult matter to say just how big a business would have to grow to become wicked in itself.

I take it there is no inherent wickedness in having a bank account, and certainly there is no sinfulness in owning only a small business, but on the other hand neither condition is a certificate of righteousness.

Our only concern with big business this evening, then, is its relation to the affairs of government, and for the purposes of this paper we are going to admit that "big business" has attained to an improperly powerful position in our political life.

It is said that by controlling the representatives of the people, Big Business has become our ruler; that, it has made itself so secure in our laws that nobody dares to attack its position, and that we all now live by the grace of Big Business. If this be true, why is it so?

Who is responsible for the representatives of the people, who hand us over, bound, to Big Business? There is but one answer—the American people.

The government of the United States is not the product merely of the constitutional convention of 1787. It is the creation of the American people. It is the result of the considerable previous experience in self-government of the American people.

The constitution of the United States was not adopted, nor the government put into operation, by any other agency than the American people and neither the constitution nor the government can be seriously damaged without the consent of the American people.

It is easy to see in the history of our country that whatever has been done for good has been done by the people. There have been leaders of the people, of course, but it has been the people that have ruled. If we have degenerated, if we have allowed the machinery of our government to pass into the control of evil-disposed men who use it for private purposes it is because the people have decreed that such things shall be, and to the American people, more than to the minority of evil-disposed people belongs the blame.

In the early days of the republic when men were impressed with the idea that the United States was the monitor of nations, when we delighted in being the country of opportunity, everybody, it seemed, was filled with a desire to prove to the world that we were happy and prosperous because we were active in the protection of our rights as citizens.

When the great struggle for freedom for American labor, the country over, resulted in the victory of free labor, it was the people of the United States who had restored the Union.

True it is that a great army and a great navy had been organized to wage war, but when the imagination pictures that grand army marching through the capital and melting away, almost as it marched, into the ranks of the American people, can it be doubted who made up that army?

At every turn of the road it has been the American people who chose the way to go.

It is a broad assertion, I admit, that the government, whether municipal, state or national, has always been representative. It never fails to reflect the character of its constituency. If it be corrupt and, alas, it frequently is, it is no more corrupt than the people who make it.

Citizenship a Trust.

But I hear some men say it only



Rear-Admiral C. B. T. Moore

represents the baser elements of the community. Is this a fair answer? Has the man who disclaims any part in the government because it is corrupt, and because he keeps as close to the Ten Commandments as the statute law of the land demands, no responsibility because he fails to do his duty as a citizen? I contend that he who does not stand forth and do battle for good government is very fitly represented as of the baser element of the community.

Citizenship in a republic is a trust. We may call it an office of high trust, and he who fails to perform its duties worthily, or does any act against those duties, is to put it very mildly guilty of all the consequences of his conduct.

In the early days when business was done on a smaller scale there was time for every man to study the issues, and as communication was not always easy and rapid, it took time to get up a movement of importance. While men were not as rich as at present, there were not the marked inequalities of condition we now see. Under such conditions it was very difficult for a demagogue or trickster to make headway with the people and there was no serious feeling of distrust.

But in our day elements have come into our lives that have caused us to question the very foundations of our government. After the American people had brought the terrible war that threatened her life to a successful conclusion; after we had cast out the devil of African slavery, we entered on a career of prosperity so great that we lost sight of our real welfare in the hot pursuit of wealth till we are now possessed of a number of devils, and our last state is pretty bad, if not worse than the first state.

With the progress of inventions and the development of our country we had great opportunities for gain that we eagerly embraced.

To develop our great western domain new railways became necessary, and charters and rights of way had to be obtained. The men who owned the lands over which the roads must pass, forgetting the ultimate advantage, held their rights of way in order to share in the gains of the railways.

It is easy to see how greed fighting greed brought into activity a class of politicians ready to serve the interests of those who had cash with which to pay for service.

The building of great railways called into existence great rolling mills and car building companies, and these called for men. The farmers spreading over the great undeveloped country helped to swell the volume of business.

The farmers, however, early felt the pinch of the struggle with big business and have generally been conservative. They have stuck to their principle as long as anybody, but they have not always been true. The spirit of their opposition to "big business," as represented by the railroads, has too often been unfair.

The condition in which we find ourselves today is due in my opinion to the departure of Americans, high and low, from true standards of morality in their political and economic relations. It is due to a general acceptance of the idea that every dollar made by cheating your neighbor, within the statute law, is honorably gained.

We have utterly lost sight of what the other fellow is entitled to and have turned our hands against our neighbors. In casting our votes we have largely ceased to regard the interests of the whole country but have confined our thought to our individual interest.

It was a knowledge of this fact that gave courage to a recent candidate for the presidency to assert that he "had no objection to a tariff if the proceeds were properly distributed," hoping by

influence of foreigners that has brought this condition about. The foreigner comes to our country as to the land of Promise. He hears of our wonderful prosperity and of our freedom. He believes it to be the land of equal opportunity and is glad to be numbered among our citizens. He is, however, untrained, as a rule, in the art of self-government and must learn from us. He is most likely to follow our lead, and it is not surprising that he is led to follow our example in our evil ways when he finds it immediately profitable, until he has learned by sad experience that his vote is for his protection from wrong and not a commodity for sale.

No, it will not do to lay the blame for all our ills at the door of our naturalized citizens. They are as a rule what we make them. It has been our right to impose tests of intelligence and knowledge and morality upon them. It has been for us to require preliminary training before giving them the privilege of becoming co-heirs with us. How have we protected our birth-right in this direction? Let any man take the World Almanac for 1913 and look over the qualifications for voting in the several states and he will find some startling evidences, not only of the sale of our birth-right for a mess of pottage, but of the absolute giving of it away.

We have been hearing a good deal of oratory lately from Arrangeddon and other localities about restoring our government to the people to whom it belongs, but much as we here desire a restoration of our government to its proper character let us not be deceived. It is not so much change in the form of government that we need, as it is a change in the character of the people.

In a country like ours the government is always by the people. There has never been a year in any state, county or town, or in the whole country, for that matter, when our people have not had a truly representative government, except possibly when the Payne-Aldrich tariff was passed.

You may say, for instance, that Illinois was misrepresented by the legislature that elected Lorimer, but has it occurred to you that the very state senator who handled the "jack pots" went home and was re-elected after being expelled from that very legislature?

Powers of Evil Active. Again I say that unless we have done our utmost duty as citizens we have become parties to all the crimes committed against our country by those administering our affairs. We have no right to hold aloof and then complain of faulty government.

The powers of evil are always active. The man who wants a privilege granted him by the community that is unfair "gets busy" and works his job for all it is worth. The average citizen can scarcely be stirred to action by any ordinary contest. It is wonderful that certain evils fasten themselves on the community and fatten on the moral flabbiness of American citizenship?

Gentlemen, it seems impossible to exhaust this subject. The longer one thinks about it the stronger grows the feeling that it is by changing the attitude of our citizens toward their responsibility for their government, and not by tinkering with constitutions, that regeneration is to come.

What good will the initiative work for the country if the citizens of that country be venal, or uninterested and neglectful?

What possible good can come from referring a question to such a constituency as re-elected the expelled corruptionist to the Illinois legislature? Would it be a very wise move to submit a judicial decision for recall to some of the constituencies just now attracting public attention?

Without entering into a discussion of the righteousness of the initiative, the referendum and the recall, I submit to your consideration the proposition that to make them useful, the voting population must not only be able to understand what they are doing, but they must be interested in what is doing and, above all, be honest.

"The life of the land is preserved by righteousness" is a good motto but unless that motto be translated into good deeds it is as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

The times are out of joint, demagogism is abroad in the land. We are offered all sorts of nostrums to cure our ills, and if the citizens of this country fail to meet the situation honestly and fearlessly we are indeed in danger.

Country Waking Up. But we heard in no uncertain tones the declaration of the people against the most dangerous of all proposed remedies, that of turning over to the executive department the responsibility for our welfare. We are not without hope. We have decided we do not want a "Tribune of the People" to look after us.

We are waking up. And when Americans are awake you cannot deceive any large portion of them any of the time.

What we need, then, for the proper management of our government is not constitutional changes, but, as President Wilson has said, that the good people of the United States shall resume the control of our affairs.

This can be done without change in the constitution. The American people saved this country from slavery and disruption. I believe we can hold off the demagogue and the grafter and that we will do it.

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